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ABSTRACT

The responsibility of the pupil personnel director in educational accountability is discussed. Although significant improvements have been made in almost every area of education in recent years, there is a sense of crisis, anger, and anxiety. The public is demanding new forms of accountability. Norms on standardized achievement tests have ceased to satisfy a sizeable segment of U.S. citizens. Questions that the public may be asking are: (1) Can you put the counselor on the firing line as is the classroom teacher and the front line administrator? Does he maintain an efficient organization, a daily schedule of interviews?; (2) Does the psychologist write voluminous case reports or does he work with people?; (3) Do you spend most of your time with the problem children and little time with the normal children? and (4) Can testing be directed to positive and immediate diagnostic purposes? (DB)

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PUPIL PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATORS

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ACCOUNTABILITY FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

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Accountability is as popular today as the mini-skirt has been in recent years. It is everybody's "thing"; hence, convention programs are centering on how to become more accountable.

Pupil personnel directors have become very important people in the operation of schools for all of the children of all of the people. When we were dealing with a selective clientele, and when school was a matter of "taking it or leaving it," each principal could be a law unto himself. There wasn't the need for coordinating the many special services.

I deem it a privilege to meet with you on the occassion of your Fifth Annual Meeting. Some of my best friends are pupil personnel directors. As you know, a pupil personnel director, more often than any other member of the administrative team, gets problems sent his way from the superintendent's office.

To say that citizenry is disturbed about its schools would be trite, indeed. The nation, as we begin the decade of the 70's, may never have been as disturbed with its educational system as it is today. The reasons are not universally accepted. I am rather certain of some factors, however. For example, our young may well have an empty and meaningless style of life because they have little to do with the things that count--the factors relating to the economy, the welfare of the family, or the improvement of their community. Where is the community? It has disappeared. Dependence brings resentment and rebellion. Bizarre dress,

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deviate conduct, and baffling behavior in general may result. A young junior high school football coach made a statement recently, which may be quite revealing: "Too many young people seem lost, empty inside."

In this setting, your job was never more demanding, and of course, never more subjected to public scrutiny. A lack of confidence in public education may be the most devastating development that has occurred in the history of our country. If we lose confidence in public education--the very foundation and pillar of our democratic society--then we are doomed to mediocrity, oblivion, disruption and, ultimately, a new form of government. I do not see this in our immediate future, but I do see reasons for apprehension. I believe it is imperative for us to be knowledgeable about the trends--the meaning of developments.

At times, as one views the American scene, it appears as if we are in a "Revolution" in American education. At other times, the developments resemble something akin to a 'Reformation." We can remember that famous "Veto" message of President Nixon. He was talking about reform. On other occasions, however, I'm inclined to believe the American people are regrouping, reassessing and reviewing the position of their schools. They are, perhaps, thinking in terms of a 'Renewal"--a renewal of spirit, a renewal of outlook; perhaps raising their horizons a bit--getting the "American Dream" out in front again.

Hence, I wonder at times whether we may be regrouping to generate a new sense of adventure and to set new goals. I wish we had a national commission of experienced practitioners--representative of all sectors of American education--to look at where we are going, where we've been the last half dozen years, and where we could or should go.

When one analyzes the elements of 'Reformation,' 'Renewal," or 'Reversal" in the present scene, there are aspects of each in the many movements. If you look at the opening of private schools in the South at the present time, you are startled

at the number of separate schools that are being established. In addition, there are a number of denominational schools, small denominational schools, that are springing up in Ohio and in other states. We are not unaware of the storefront schools that are opening in the ghetto. We are cognizant of the voucher concept that has received a rather sizeable appropriation recently. It, alone, is a whole new approach.

These latter developments seem to say, "Are we going back to the pre-Civil War period?" As I recall being told, my grandfather, who was a student at Otterbein College, was in Missouri teaching as the Civil War broke out. He was teaching the children of a group of families while trying to earn funds to return to college. He taught in accordance with the wishes of one small group of parents. We had what one might call "Pluralism," at that time. As a result, most of American education in that period could be characterized as being in the area of "Privatism." It was not very successful; only two or three percent of the youngsters were enrolled in a secondary school.

Since that time and especially in recent years, significant improvements have been made in almost every area of education. Why, then, the pervasive sense of crisis? Why has progress produced anger and anxiety rather than satisfaction?

History would indicate that social discontent frequently is the product of social improvement, rather than of stagnation. During his study of America, de Tocqueville observed that the "Evil which was suffered patiently as inevitable, seems unendurable as soon as the idea of escaping from it crosses men's minds."

A society that used to struggle to get the proverbial glass half full, now sees it as a fourth empty. I would submit that we are witnessing a "Revolution of rising expectation." A"Revolution"deeply sensitive to the fact that a nation which can make "one small step for man"--and provide for its observation

240,000,000 miles away by television throughout the world--has to find a way to make the "giant leap for mankind" in eliminating poverty, racial bias, pollution, unemployment, crime... This is the central force brought about by the rising expectations of not only the 200,000,000 Americans, but the 3,580,000,000 human beings on our planet.

This sensitivity to our unfinished work is further compounded by the enormous widening of choice made possible by contemporary society. In past generations, men inherited their occupations, their status, their religion, their life style, and their struggle to survive gave them little time to question anything. Today, by contrast, we are presented with a bewildering range of options. We are forced to choose our occupations, places to live, marital partners, number of children, kind of religion, political allegiance, friendships, allocation of income, and, in general, a style of life. The individual is now required to choose, and, in a sense, to create his own identity. Can education be designed, safely, to help the young choose their identity more positively? To develop purpose and meaning for their lives? Isn't this the important role for the counselor?

If our youngsters are to understand the economic system and develop a sense of usefulness, which is essential to self-respect, then what is the role of the placement director in obtaining part-time employment for those students?

Our form of education has been commendable from the mass standpoint. We have been hampered, however, from the beginning by problems of quantity--more pupils than we could house, and since World War II, with a lack of qualified teachers. Now, for the first time in our history, we are approaching the time when we can move from the quantity struggle to that of quality. This permits a redesign of American education to serve the individual. I am certain that this is where your emphasis in pupil personnel has been, and where you would like it to be.

Recently, in Ohio, a most interesting study was completed by Market Opinion Research of Detroit. It is one of the more revealing and interesting studies that I have seen. It is entitled, "High School Students Look at Their World." As I reviewed the publication, one of the areas which gave me considerable concern was the students' view and respect for the counselor. As you know, we have difficulty in getting additional funding on the Potomac and in our state legislatures to support an expanding counseling service. The reasons may be quite evident when one views the responses of the students on their attitudes toward their counselor. When asked, "When you have a personal problem, with whom would you most likely discuss it?", only 2.9% of those youngsters surveyed responded that they would turn to the school counselor. If the teachers are critical of the counselor, perhaps we should note that they did not come out with flying colors either. The youngsters indicated that only 2.8% would go to the teacher for such advice. The peer group, however, got up much nearer the 50% point.

The public has ways of getting to the school; at this time, one of the ways is to withhold funds; another is to pass legislation requiring academic achievement in certain dimensions before the state may award a high school diploma. California has such a law and others may well be proposed in legislative halls in the coming session.

Some 20 states are moving to use the national assessment instruments in order to determine their state of progress.

Performance contracting is moving rapidly: In this state, one of the more interesting performance contracts concerns the Bannaker School in Gary. The procedure of recording the number of pupil conferences, the numbers of tests administered, the number of child study reports written, the number of homes visited, the number of calls made, and similar statistical information no longer has a substantive appeal in the "Accountability" climate.

We, as professionals, have a responsibility to see that such contracting is well understood and that it possesses integrity. The Texarkana experiences have placed a stigma on the most publicized effort to date. The new emphasis is on--"Does it make a difference? Did you get the job done?", and the like. Norms on standardized achievement tests have ceased to satisfy at least a sizeable segment of our citizenry. These persons are demanding new forms of accountability.

The public may be saying things such as the following:

1. Can you put the counselor on the firing line as is the classroom teacher and the front line administrator? Does he maintain an efficient organization, a daily schedule of interviews? THE ISSUE: Do kids find the counselor helpful and do they report such to their parents and teachers? If so, the counselors' status would be in the bull market of demand for more counselors and with appropriations accordingly.

2. Does the psychologist continue to write voluminous case reports or does he work with people? I gather that the public is saying to us, "Get it people-oriented, get off paper work and get out of the conference area." "Up with people, and down with paper," and "Get to the guts of the problem!" THE ISSUE: Can we get to the psychologist so that he will eliminate his concerns for being ultra-professional and become a practitioner?

3. Do you spend most of your time with the problem children and little time with the normal children? THE ISSUE: The counselors and others should touch base with the normal pupil on a regular schedule--even if it is only a three or four-minute conference, because it would be a rare member of the human race who does

not have some kind of problem. Preventive medicine may become the best kind of medical practice. Preventive counseling could become the bulwark of good school programs.

4. Can testing be directed to positive and immediate diagnostic purposes? I refer to the use of the profile sheet in identifying areas for emphasis. In the important area of emptiness in the lives of young people and the indefiniteness of the future, we are having some success with the OVIS--Ohio Vocational Interest Survey--in helping students select and determine a potential course of study for future employment. THE ISSUE: Offer counsel and offer tangible suggestions; do something. It is far better for a youngster to be preparing for some occupation, even though he switches plans later, than to be drifting.

Your work as pupil personnel directors will grow with each new technological advance, each rampant urban development and each move toward the anonymous society. The school must be the cement that brings us together. It is the only flagpole around which we can rally. The school is the ladder to the 'American Dream' and the 'American Dream' is the most precious of our resources. I urge you to take heart and bring the school into this part of the 20th Century so that the 'American Dream' can again become a bright force in the lives of our young people.

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